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THE

DEBATE

IN THE

Great Britain

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON TUESDAY, THE 2d MARCH, 1790,

ON THE

MOTION OF MR. FOX,

FOR A

REPEAL

OF THE

CORPORATION AND TEST ACTS;

IN WHICH THE

ARGUMENTS OF THE DIFFERENT SPEAKERS

ARE GIVEN WITH

CORRECTNESS AND IMPARTIALITY.

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THE

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS

ON TUESDAY, THE 24 MARCH, 1832

OF THE

REPORT OF THE

FOR A

REPORT



GOVERNMENT

IN WHICH THE

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TUESDAY, MARCH 2d, 1790.

MR. *FOX*, about half past four o'clock, requested the indulgence of the House to make a motion pursuant to the order of the day. The clerk then read the Act, 13 CHARLES II. commanding all persons to receive the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England, before the acceptance of a share in the government of cities, boroughs, or corporations:—Also the Act 25th of the same reign, concerning Popish Recusants.

Mr. *Fox* then proceeded to observe, that what he was about to submit to their consideration that day, having afforded cause of jealousy and alarm to many of his best friends, as well as to many worthy members of the community, it behoved him to state the reasons of his conduct. He hoped the House would pardon him for occupying part of their time with what related to him personally; but as the occasion was of a peculiar
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nature, he apprehended that the necessity would be obvious. He said the present was a business on which he did not wish to obtrude himself, as he conceived that the Honourable Gentleman, who had brought it forward on a former occasion, (Mr. *Beaufoy*) had more information on the subject than he pretended to possess, and therefore he wished it had remained in his hands, as it formerly did. But that Honourable Gentleman rather wishing to decline it, (for what reasons he knew not) the Dissenters had applied to him. He knew that he now stood forward in the cause of truth and liberty: and however averse he was to encrease temporary enemies, he would, in opposition to the mistaken motives of certain men, discharge what he considered to be his duty to society.

Having said these few words, Mr. *Fox* observed, that he should only trespass further on their patience to state that he could not deny but it was a considerable gratification to his mind, that they had made choice of him to manage this Business. It shewed, that although they had differed with him formerly on some points, yet, when they had entrusted to him so great and so important a concern, they must, upon the whole, have regarded his conduct with approbation, and entertained a good opinion of the person into whose hands they wished to put it.

Mr. *Fox* next proceeded to the important business which he wished the House to take under their consideration. In the course of the argument he might think it necessary to enlarge upon it, more on account of the importance, than the difficulty of the subject. He thought that after what had passed on former occasions, the present was a time, which, in his opinion, called

called upon public men to declare their sentiments freely and candidly upon public topics; and he hoped he should have the good fortune to vote with the majority of the House.

When a nation took under its consideration a great and momentous object, like the present, it was laudable to examine it thoroughly, and to trace it to its first principles.

The real meaning and the avowed principles of *toleration* had been much misrepresented and misunderstood. *Religious* toleration was indeed of very modern origin; and, though it might have been talked of, had not been practised till within these few years. *Persecution* too was a word very ill defined. It was vulgarly supposed to allude only to those atrocities that had been perpetrated in less enlightened ages, or that occurred in times of civil discord, and of national commotion. But he would be bold to assert that neither the fires kindled in Smithfield, nor the barbarous executions and depredations recently committed by a French mob, afforded more genuine instances of *persecution*, than the doctrine set up by some Churchmen, of rendering persons liable to penalties and keeping them constantly subject to incapacities for their Religious Opinions. It was through this kind of Persecution, as much perhaps as the other trammels in which they were held, that France had been driven to resistance, and to an entire re-examination of the Rights of Men.— In their ideas of Toleration and of Persecution, the Clergy of the Established Church went upon principles wholly erroneous. These vices in Church Government he compared to Madness, which sometimes reasons rightly, and draws some particular inferences

well ; but in other respects argues vague, and widely from the truth. If any medicine could be applied to heal this disorder, he said, that it could best be found in religion, in Christianity itself. This did not inspire men with arrogance and pride, with jealousy in regard to themselves, and diffidence of others ;—it did not warrant a hasty and unfavourable judgment of men, merely from their opinions ; but where it could not discern vice, would naturally infer virtue. In morality, however, it might be as in other matters, the Cause should be traced from the Effect, not the Effect from the Cause—it was from the *fruit* that the *trees* should be judged.

Mr. Fox next adverted to an Act of Toleration passed in the Reign of KING WILLIAM. There was, he observed, no Toleration granted to the Dissenters, of such an unlimited nature as insinuated. That could not be called an Act of Toleration, which prescribed the Terms, “ You must subscribe to the 39 Articles, “ and then you will receive the Benefits of the Act of “ Toleration ; if you act otherwise, the indulgence “ will be denied.” Here was Toleration with a vengeance !

The Repeal of the Test Act is right, when reason, justice, and equity, call aloud for it. Impel not the Dissenters, by disappointment, upon consolatory expedients. Let the liberality of the present age preclude an appeal to that of posterity. Can we contemplate with enthusiastic rapture the generosity of a neighbouring nation, and refuse to be actuated by the same noble emotions of the mind ? Between the Dissenters and the Churchmen there should be no other Test than an equality of freedom, and a continuance of esteem. By the experience of the moderation and zeal, for which they

they have been always distinguished in defence of our glorious Constitution, we need not dread any danger from the flux of years; and the gloomy persuasion of past ages, which gratified superstition and malignity, should now be obliterated in terms of the most fervent and indissoluble friendship.

The prejudice and passion which have devolved from one generation to another, can embrace no new securities from succeeding times; and our rational faculties, recovering their own transcendent qualities, should now repose on the stability of justice and truth. Let us glean, by diligent selection, out of common occurrences, and what can we find to militate against the intended motion? Why should we perplex our fellow-subjects by an opposition of interest? Why should we fear that the present possessors, by granting a participation of immunities to another constitutional claimant, should endanger the State? Ridicule being the Test of truth, he might certainly affirm, that there was no conduct more absurd, no precaution more ridiculous. He hoped that the Church of England would rise superior to delirious ecstasies, check the progress of passion, and view human sentiment through the medium of liberality.

A candid examination into the history of Great Britain would, in his opinion, be favourable to the Dissenters. In the rebellions in 1715, and 1745, this country was extremely indebted to their exertions. During those troublesome periods, they had acted with the spirit and fidelity of British Subjects, zealous and vigilant in defence of the Constitution. At both these periods they stood forward the Champions of British Liberty, and obtained an eminent share in repelling the
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the foes of the HOUSE of HANOVER. Their exertions then were so magnanimous, that he had no scruple to assert, that to their endeavours we owed the preservation of the Church and State. What was the reward which they obtained? We very generously granted them a pardon for their noble exploits, by passing an act of indemnity in their favour.

Gentlemen should recollect, that at the times alluded to, the High Churchmen did not display much gallantry, for many appeared perplexed and pusillanimous. Hence the superior glory of the Dissenters, who, regardless of every danger, had boldly stood forth in defence of the Rights and Liberties of the people of these kingdoms. He remembered an observation of SWIFT, for every man who perused that celebrated Genius could not forget the force of his reasoning, "I do not," says he, "affirm that every *Whig* is an *Infidel*, but I affirm that every *Infidel* is a *Whig*." He did not know whether this was true, but on the present occasion, he might say, if every *High Churchman* was not a *Jacobite*, at least every *Jacobite* was a *High Churchman*.

They then—considering the Church and State in danger;—that as there existed a considerable difference of opinion in religious, as well as political matters;—that as they were afraid of a return of the ancient Family to the Throne, were of opinion, that the best way would be to declare immediately in favour of a Popish Prince. At that time, the Dissenters, regardless of the foolish Acts existing against them, drew their swords in defence of their fellow-subjects, and made the scales immediately preponderate in our favour. The Church, as a very liberal encouragement of their achievements,

adopted the plan already described, by passing an Act of indemnity or pardon, for the heinous crime of defending the British Constitution.

Hence the restraints enumerated in the Act of the 13th of CHARLES II. should, so far as concerns the Dissenters in England, be repealed. That these useful members of the State should be obliged to qualify themselves for a share in the exercise of the Government of Cities, Boroughs, and places under Administration, by an acceptance of the Sacrament, conformably to the rites of the Church of England, was an Act of injustice and oppression. It was a corruption of Religious Ceremonies, and a perversion of the dictates which are generally understood between God and the Conscience. Should we, however, in the plenitude of our power—in the height of our jealousy—in the madness of our indignation—spurn at their mild solicitation for the Repeal of the Test Act, there may perhaps arise new sources of influence to alienate the affections of the people from the executive Government of the country; consequently, the arm of Administration may be unnerved, and that of a foreign enemy aided and abetted.

Some, not content with a Toleration of Religion, which was undoubtedly at all times commendable, insisted, that Persecution was a principle of kindness to the rest of mankind, because it drove them to extremities, by which there was a chance of converting numbers to the wished-for doctrines. The spirit of toleration, he believed, would be admitted by every candid and rational man. Why should it not be admitted?

“ Is it not possible, that another man should be actuated as conscientiously and as religiously as I?

“ With regard to opinions concerning the *Roman Catholics*, I am apt to imagine, that, notwithstanding

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“ the espousers of that religion last century deserved
 “ certain marks of obloquy, we were too rigid, and
 “ too illiberal, in our censures of that fraternity who
 “ appeared in the present century.—In the madness
 “ of our anger, in the recollection of former resent-
 “ ment, we judged too rashly, too proudly, and with
 “ too much inhumanity. Whatever be the religious
 “ opinions of the Roman Catholics, and however il-
 “ liberally some gentlemen may condemn them, as
 “ subversive not only of the principles of Government,
 “ but likewise of morality, I, for one, in contradistinc-
 “ tion to their narrow maxims, must affirm, that in
 “ the countries where the Roman Catholic Religion is
 “ practised, the principles of Religion, Morality, and
 “ Government, are as well and strenuously cultivated
 “ as in any other.—God forbid that I should deliver or
 “ entertain any other sentiments!—If I did, those who
 “ hear me would justly scout, and explode the pern-
 “ cious doctrines.” The language of Persecution de-
 clares—“ You know not what is good for you. We
 “ are better judges of your consciences than you can
 “ pretend to be; therefore consent to our Creed, or
 “ persecution and condemnation must follow.”—
 What, on the contrary, is the language of Toleration?
 The very spirit of Toleration indicates charity and
 diffidence. It imagines, that one man may be right,
 and another wrong, but it never wishes to adopt cruelty
 and persecution.

Since he had now adventured these observations on
 Toleration, he begged the House would allow him to
 proceed farther on the same topic—presuming that
 their silence was an encouragement to the effusions of
 his mind, he would boldly and unequivocally affirm,
 that

that he not only was a friend to Toleration in Religion, but in the dissemination of particular sentiments on public affairs. He judged from men's actions, not from their private opinions.

Those who acted perfidiously to the State, ought to be punished—those who acted well, ought to be rewarded. What then were our fears, when the Laws and Institutions of the Empire remained as immutable as ever? The Repeal of the Test-Act is no renunciation of Rights—it is only a recognizance of the just claims of our fellow-subjects. It is the ray of reason, guided by the voice of liberality. It is the triumph of truth over prejudice and passion. On such an occasion, the hearts of the Dissenters beat with a genial heat. Forgetful of the past, they begin to anticipate their future felicity, by which every sense, every faculty, is dissolved in joy. The fears of the Church of England are idle phantoms, delusive dreams, nay, the shadows of dreams, magnified by every wind, and strengthened by the unaccountable breath of the ignorant and illiberal multitude. Remove those scruples of a vain superstition, which disgrace an enlightened age—confound not these days of peace and security with those of turbulence and violence—sink not the Dissenters in dejection, but mollify them by a free and unconditional grant of the public privileges, the social endearments which render life and liberty more desirable to every Englishman.

If there be no relaxation of the severities which exist, this cannot surely be the boasted period favourable to the extension of human intelligence. We are not actuated by the luminous labours of those philosophers, who, as the dearest friends to society, have improved

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and refined mankind. We are unhappily relapsed into ignorance and barbarism, into cruelty and persecution—despising the doctrine of reflection, and deriding the rule of rectitude. There should be no other Test than the Oath of Allegiance.

Why were gentlemen among the Dissenters excluded from holding any share in the executive Government, when they were received without the application of a Test Act among the Commons? Could they not, if inclinable, be more dangerous in the Church and State in the Senate, than as individuals in any official situation under Government? They certainly could.

To judge, however, more rationally, was it of any importance whether a man was an Unitarian or a Trinitarian? No. If we conceived such a predilection for Test Acts, why not institute them upon the principles of common sense? Why not at once make a Test for Monarchy? That, however, was unnecessary, as the Oath of Supremacy was, in every respect, adapted for the purpose. Why not accept of those men as members of the executive Government, who perfectly agree with you in your political creed, although they may, in some trifling *minutiae*, disagree with you in private religious matters.

There existed what was called a Toleration Act in Great Britain agreeable only to those who granted, and not to those who received it. What was it but a *toleration* of *prescribed* articles of faith, enjoining conformity to certain religious ceremonies on accepting any civil employment? Toleration, he maintained, was founded on the principles of natural, as well as of the Christian religion. It consisted in a just diffidence of our

our own opinions, while it recommended charity and forbearance towards our neighbours.

He had heard much obloquy thrown out against the Roman Catholics, whose religious opinions, it was said, led them to commit murder, treason, and all the catalogue of horrid crimes, for *conscience sake*. However much he might lament the errors of that sect, did the experience of the present enlightened age justify the accusation?—Certainly not:—It was only the haughty, conceited language of Persecution which led men to judge uncharitably, and to act with bitterness; while, on the other hand, the language of Toleration confessed its doubts, and acknowledged its ignorance. It was a language more amiable, at the same time that it was more just; for it reasoned *a posteriori*, that is, by reasoning from effects to their causes. This was the only safe way, and the only probable method of arriving at truth: men must judge of actions and not of opinions; they must judge of overt acts. Those who acted well towards the State, and were good members of the community, ought to enjoy all the rights of citizens; and though they entertain opinions which I conceive bad, yet they are not bad in *them*, because they produce good effects. The subject appeared to him to be exceedingly plain, though there seemed to be much doubt upon it, in the opinion of other persons.

If it should be argued, that certain religious opinions might circuitously affect the constitution of the established Church, if all Sects were admitted to civil employments without conforming to the Test Laws, he would maintain that the Constitution was equally in danger from civil opinions. No Test was required from a Member of Parliament: and yet his opinions

might be, that an absolute Government was preferable to a free Government; he might despise the trial by Jury, and entertain principles the most unconstitutional: nevertheless such a man might be the Minister of this country; for the Constitution had wisely said, that opinions were of no force till they came into action; and then, if they were bad, they would be punished.

But although the custom of this country had exploded Tests directly in civil opinions, yet it had retained them indirectly. The Corporation and Test Acts were made after a Civil War, from political motives, and were totally ineffectual for the purpose for which they were intended, namely, for preserving the established religion: because a man might conscientiously take the sacrament, according to the rites of the Church of England, though he had not the least regard for the Hierarchy.

These are truisms which cannot be refuted. Hence, not only the Dissenters are innocent members of the community, but highly meritorious. He, however, would at present wave the discussion of merits or demerits, and rest his cause upon the principles of justice and equity. If some of the Dissenters are disaffected to the Church and State, this cannot surely be advanced as a reason for the exclusion of the remainder from the enjoyment of their natural rights as citizens. Nay, he would go farther—if ninety-nine out of one hundred were disaffected, the one who was meritorious, ought not to be deprived of his privileges.

He then made some observations on the affairs of Scotland, relative to the exercise of religion; and said, that the gallant sailors and soldiers of the North, who belonged

belonged to the Kirk, were, by the Acts now in force against the Dissenters, liable to prosecutions, but was happy that nobody had as yet, attempted such an obnoxious measure. These men, who by their prowess had added much to British glory, were at present liable to the penalty of 500*l.* besides disabilities equal to an outlaw. For what? For the *enormous crime* of serving their king and country.

He then, as an illustration of the subject, recurred to the Reign of King William, when the High Church was affected with doubts, dangers and alarms, exclaiming aloud, agreeable to custom, that the Church and State were in danger. These, among many other instances, were sufficient to corroborate the vague apprehensions of the Churchmen. In the year 1787, when the Honourable Gentleman, (Mr. Beaufoy,) first submitted the question to the House, the Churchmen were not aroused from their lethargy. The second attempt gave some cause of alarm; and the present had brought forward all the zealots of the party, and no question could be more generally reprobated.

Mr. Fox next entered into a declaration of his religious opinions, and defined the Church of England to signify three distinct things:—

First. The doctrines and discipline of the Church of England; and in that sense, he, as a member, revered it. He thought it had observed a proper medium, omitting every thing external, and following nothing that was superstitious and absurd.

Secondly. The Church of England signified the individuals that composed it. And thirdly, he considered the Church of England as a party, and as the worst in this country. The Church had never appear-
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ed as a party, but to do mischief. He thought it a high misfortune if the Dissenters acted as a party. If they did, the most probable way of putting an end to it was, by granting them all the privileges of other citizens. It was natural for a body of men like the Dissenters, when they found themselves aggrieved, to join together, and to act in concert. The Church of England constituted the most formidable party. In the reign of Henry the Eighth, &c. the Church appeared to be extremely timid and fearful, which was only a handle for procuring tyranny and absolute power.— Tumults were raised in favour of passive obedience and non-resistance, and Dr. Sacheverel was punished by the House of Lords.

Mr. Fox condemned all religious assemblies, when convened for party purposes; and upon that principle he said he would condemn the proceedings of the Dissenters, if he were apprised that they were instigated by party motives. The cry of *alarm!* had frequently been resounded on frivolous occasions from one quarter of the kingdom to another. It had always been adopted as the refuge of tyrants, and assumed all the appearance of the most formidable engine. In the days of **TIBERIUS**, whenever the tyrant conceived the rise of religious influence, he immediately gave orders to sound the alarm. Henry VIII. and other despots, followed similar measures. The fluctuations however of different periods was worthy of attention.

When Charles I. swayed the sceptre of these realms, there was some reason for alarm, as he had committed several attacks on the liberties of the subject; but when James II. acceded to the Crown of England, and when there was the greatest appearance of danger to
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the Church and State from Popish Ministers, the High Churchmen were so stunned with the perseverance of Royalty, that they formed tumults and cabals in favour of passive obedience. These were ridiculous circumstances, but indisputable facts. When Dr. Sacheverel was punished, he was convinced, that however alarming the times might appear to madness, bigotry, or superstition, the Church of England was not in danger. Upon the accession of the House of Hanover, the same cries were resounded, that the Church was in danger; but the reason assigned for the tumult was—a strenuous opposition to a *Whig Ministry*.

From these circumstances, he believed that a man of candour could hardly see such scenes without abhorrence and disgust; for the High Churchmen almost as often opposed their friends as enemies. He then mentioned the doctrines of the celebrated SHERLOCK and TILLOTSON on the subject, part of which he condemned, part of which he approved. “If the Church of England be in danger, let any man stand up and describe it; but he believed, however Gentlemen might differ from him on the question, there was not one in that House that was afraid of the subversion of the doctrines of the Church of England.”

It had been insinuated, that the Church of England was alarmed, because it was apprehended that the Clergy would not exhibit that portion of activity which stimulated those of the Dissenters. This he considered as a curious argument; and well might the Dissenters exclaim,—“Is it not harsh and cruel that we continue to be deprived of our natural rights, because the clergy of the Church of England will not consent to
“dis-

“ discharge their duty !” These were futile reasons indeed, and certainly no convincing proof that the present motion should be neglected.

It has been advanced as a strong argument against the Repeal of the Test Act, that Dr. PRIESTLEY a man of great erudition and ingenuity, had professed himself an enemy to all establishments, consequently to that of the Church of England. By avowing his sentiments in a manly manner, the Doctor deserved applause instead of censure, and who was absurd enough to condemn him for his candour ? In this enlightened age, he hoped every Gentleman had a right to publish his sentiments on a public subject. Was the Church in danger from the Doctor’s honest declaration ? As well might it be affirmed, that the Church would be in danger, if the First Lord of the Treasury were a Dissenter. Was the Church in danger because a noble Duke (RICHMOND) had declared himself so far a friend to innovation, as to contend that the mode of Elections should be totally and fundamentally altered ? Would you punish his Grace for publishing his opinion on what so materially affected the Constitution ?— And yet no man could deny, that he was not likely to occupy higher offices in the State than Dr. PRIESTLEY ? You cannot surely now expect danger from the operations of either the Pope or the Pretender. The power of the former is reduced almost to a nullity, and we are taught to believe that the latter cause is entirely removed. It has been presumed, that “ the Dissenters are great sticklers for Toleration when undermost, and little granters when uppermost.” It should be recollected, that it is the natural disposition of man to remonstrate against oppressions.

The Ministry who were concerned in the formation of the Union between England and Scotland, acted a glorious and laudable part. They established *two religions*—Hierarchy for England, and the doctrines of the Kirk for Scotland. They wisely considered, that religious discussions were inconsistent with the business of a politician, and after instituting that religion which was most consonant to the dispositions of the people in each kingdom, they removed from the scene, and left the final adjustment of the various modes to the Divines. He thought that the Dissenters of England should possess the same immunities with those in Scotland.—Although the Kirk was the establishment of that kingdom, yet the English Dissenters, the Episcoparians or Non-jurors, were admitted into offices under Government without any Test Act.

He rejoiced at the new nation of Englishmen which appeared in America, where the spirit of Toleration was very happily diffused, by the enactment of the most salutary laws.

He then bestowed a beautiful panegyric on the late Mr. Hume, by affirming, that whether he considered his conversational or historical talents, he respected him as one of the most rational and best informed writers that ever existed.

With regard to systems of government, he mentioned several topics in which he differed from that immortal author. He exclaimed, that the present tumult was as great and tremendous, as if the Dissenters were attacking the Bill of Rights. “If the Test and Corporation Acts be the pillars of the Constitution, it was not worthy of preservation.”

He sincerely lamented the absence of his noble friend (Lord North) whose great abilities would considerably illustrate the important subject of debate. Religion was not intended by the Great Author as the medium of oppression, but to meliorate the morals of mankind.

The doctrine, first broached by Bishop Warburton, of the connection between Church and State, was the next object of Mr. Fox's animadversion. The pretended necessity for this alliance he reprobated in the most pointed terms. According to this new-fangled doctrine, the Church was not to rely upon its own merits, nor was Religion to be established upon the truth of its own evidence, but was to be propped and bolstered up by the assistance of Civil Power. Was this the way, he asked, in which Christianity was first established?—In its infancy, when it had to combat the prejudices of mankind, and to overcome an infinity of obstacles, had it any such support from the Roman Emperors, or from the Roman Senate? It was an idea, he said, shameful to be inculcated by a Christian Prelate—to appeal from the truth of the Scriptures, to the authority of the Civil Power. Religion, in his opinion, had nothing to do with the political constitution of a State: it would *contaminate* and be *contaminated* by it; the result of such an alliance must necessarily be, that the one is CORRUPTED and the other ENSLAVED!

A review of the conduct of the Clergy, from the time of the Restoration, into which Mr. Fox entered very fully, but through which we have neither time nor room to pursue his track, could not fail of shewing with how much artifice they acted, when they *made chimerical fears* the ground of unprovoked and
unmerited

unmerited persecution. A report, he said, had gone forth, (he hoped that it was without foundation) that a Prelate of the Church had written a letter to the Clergy of his Diocese, ordering them not to give their interest to a particular Member of that House, at the next election, for having voted for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts last session. If they talked of innovation, *what innovation* could be more alarming to the Constitution, than this precedent of an English Bishop, not only interfering in an election for a Member of Parliament, directly in the face of the privileges of that House, but marshalling his ecclesiastical bands, and hurling his *Anathemas* against those who act, as if they imagined that the Civil Power could exist in any degree of independence of the Church authority? Such Anti-Christian conduct was little calculated to do away the spirit of party, with which the Dissenters, finding themselves oppressed, must be actuated. Many of the Dissenters, he was well persuaded, were friends to the Church establishment; but this was the surest way to force them to be enemies to it; and if it be pretended, that they are now feared, how much more so ought they not to be, when irritated into hatred, and persecuted into hostility.

That he might deal out *with an equal measure* to both parties, Mr. Fox took notice of Dr. Price's Sermon, preached in November, before the Revolution Society. Many passages, he said, in that discourse, were worthy of an enlightened Philosopher, who, not confined by local attachments, glories in the freedom of all the human race; but those passages would be better *in his Speech* than in the *Doctor's Sermon*; to

make a political engine of the pulpit, was what he should ever reprobate, whether in a Dissenter or a High-Church man. *Politics* and *Religion* should ever go *unmixed*; and the Clergy were no more qualified to handle Political Subjects in their Sermons, than they were in that House to discuss topics of Religion.

He then bestowed many admirable encomiums on Religion; and, after a variety of other arguments, concluded by remarking,—“ With regard to myself, “ I am sorry that I shall suffer the temporary indignation of some friends, both absent and present, “ whose opinions I very much respect. When, however, I see the banners of Religious Liberty reared “ on one side, it is impossible I can hesitate for a “ moment. I must enlist, and combat every difficulty, regardless of party motives. Possessing “ the enthusiasm of Religious Liberty, I evidently “ perceive for which cause I must encounter. If certain members of the Dissenters have formerly stigmatized me with the most severe epithets, in comparing my actions and conduct through life to “ *Oliver Cromwell*, I am now proud that their eyes “ have been so far opened towards a reconciliation, “ and an acknowledgment of their errors, as to solicit my exertions thus conspicuously in their favour; I can assure them, that to me it is no small consolation to fight their battles; and if ever the “ High Churchmen do me the honour of a consultation on the tenets of their Religion, I shall discharge my duty to them with equal ardour and “ fidelity.”

Mr. Fox, after a speech of nearly *three hours*, concluded with moving, “ That this House will immediately

“ diately resolve itself into a Committee of the whole
 “ House, to consider of so much of the said Acts as
 “ requires persons before they are admitted to any
 “ office, civil or military, or any place of trust under
 “ the Crown, to receive the Sacrament of the Lord’s
 “ Supper, according to the rites of the Church of
 “ England.”

Sir *Henry Hoghton* began with saying, that he should wave taking any notice of the very able manner Mr. *Beaufoy* had opened the business, on two former times, when a motion similar to the present was discussed in this House, as justice had been fully done him by the right honourable Mover of the present Motion, the exertions of whose very distinguished abilities, were a proof how good a judge he must be of the abilities of any other. The justice of the application of the Protestant Dissenters, had been so forcibly evinced by the honourable Mover, that he would not make any apology for his appearing a third time an advocate for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. Though with the rest of the Dissenters, he was gratefully impressed with the liberality of the two Houses, in relieving the Protestant Ministers and School-Masters from the pressure of a very severe Act; he did not consider the relief as a boon obtained by the generosity of the British Parliament, but a restoration of a right unjustly withheld; and he joined in the present application, upon the ground of a claim of right. As he thought it unjust that the Protestant Dissenters should be deprived of the eligibility to civil offices, merely on account of their dissent from the established Church; after their cause had been so ably illustrated by the right honourable Mover, he was far from being abam-

ed to profess himself a Protestant Dissenter, and with pride he looked to the history of the times preceding the passing of these Acts. That he had very accurately read all the references to the journals mentioned in the pamphlet, entitled, "the Right of the Dissenters to a full Toleration, &c." and found them very correct; they all testified the respect of the friends of civil and religious liberty, to the predecessors of the present Dissenters, who bravely adhered to the Patriots of those times, who resisted the violent attempts of the Crown and the Mitre; and when the Church was in danger, and their friendship asked, they always stood by them, and subjected themselves to the severity of those acts, rather than comply with the measures of the Crown, when a toleration was offered them. He lamented the animosities and rancour that prevailed in many places; was always sorry when any disrespectful language was used, with regard to the Established Church; that the religion of a State should always be treated with civility; that it was very disgraceful to the character and office of a Prelate, to engage in political disputes; but he was not at liberty to charge a learned Prelate with being the author of a letter to influence an election, as he did not know the fact for certain; that he had many Clergymen for his most intimate friends; and observed, that the two acts under consideration, were, one in the House of Commons, and the other in the House of Lords, attempted to be rendered perpetual, but the attempt failed.—It was, he said, proposed in Scotland to have a Test Act there as well as England, by some persons; but was not insisted upon by the Patriots in Scotland, for fear of impeding the Union. He believed the argument urged on a former

former occasion, was too illiberal and futile to be again renewed, 'that the more conscious a Dissenter was, the more desirous he must be to have his mode of worship established,' and there was no answering such an argument. He professed his good wishes to the Establishment, and said, that a prudent man would rather submit to a grievance, than run the hazard of great confusion, by attempting to overturn the Established Church, which he should strenuously oppose. He concluded with saying, that he did not despair of seeing the time when some of the Bishops, to the great piety of many of whom he bore his testimony, should move for the Repeal of a sacramental Test, thereby shewing them some occasion for the prostitution of a solemn rite, and convincing the world, that they were more concerned for the interest of religion, than for any temporal emoluments—That the Church of England received its special temporalities and emoluments from the State, and therefore to call the Church an ally of the State, he could not but deem very unconstitutional and assuming language.

Mr. *Martin* said, that from the moment he had the honour of entering that House, as one of its Members to the present hour, it had been with him a fixed and constant principle, and avowedly so in public and in private, that a majority of electors of every place sending Representatives to Parliament, had a constitutional right to instruct their Representatives, whenever they think it expedient to exercise that right. That his constituents had thought it expedient to instruct their Representatives to oppose the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts: that therefore he thought himself bound to vote against the Repeal: at the same time

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It appeared to him a duty he owed to himself, and the consistency of his conduct, to declare that his private opinion upon this subject continued unchanged; and that he could not but flatter himself, that when the unhappy heats which had been kindled by jarring opinions upon this matter should have subsided, that some favourable opportunity would be embraced by the Legislature, for granting spontaneously to the Dissenters, that which some persons seem to think they claim, at this time, with too much earnestness and zeal.

Mr. Pitt began with declaring, that he could not avoid offering himself to the Speaker's eye, at that early period of the debate; wishing, as soon as possible, to reply to the Right Honourable Gentleman opposite to him, with whom, upon his general principles and ideas of Persecution and Toleration contrasted, he, and every other person, must fully agree; but with whom he disagreed in the extent to which he conceived, if he rightly understood the Honourable Gentleman, he seemed inclined to push those principles. He said, he meant that day to state his objections to the motion then before the House, as distinctly and explicitly as he had twice before stated them; and he would also assure the House, what were the opinions which he now entertained, that served to strengthen and confirm him in his former opinion on the question. He felt himself, and considered the House to be likewise under very great obligation to the Right Honourable Gentleman, for his having cleared away the mystery in which the object of the Dissenters had been enveloped; he had fairly and openly exhibited to the House the full extent to which the motion was meant to be carried; and made it evident, that the point at issue between them, simply and plainly

plainly was, whether the House should or should not at once relinquish those acts, which had, by the wisdom of our ancestors, served as a bulwark to the Church; the constitution of which was so connected and interwoven with the interests and preservation of the Constitution of the State, that the former could not be endangered, without hazarding the safety of the latter. He had heard with approbation the Right Hon. Gentleman's general arguments against Persecution, and in favour of Toleration; but he was surprised at the latitude of definition to which he seemed inclined to carry Toleration; an extent of definition which it would not bear, and which, he was convinced, had never before been given it from the beginning of the world. Toleration by no means could be considered as Equality; it differed from Persecution, and it differed from an Establishment: to avoid and abstain, no man could be more ready to consent; and he was equally willing to grant every protection of the laws in support of the religion and property of individuals: but the necessity of a certain, permanent, and specific Church Establishment, rendered it essential, that Toleration should not go to an equality which would endanger the establishment, and thence no longer be Toleration. The extent of the Right Hon. Gentleman's principles, he said, went to the admittance of every class of Dissenters to a full and complete equality, and even to the admittance of those who might conscientiously think it their duty to subvert the Established Church. The Right Hon. Gentleman's principles went not only to the admittance of Roman Catholics, but Papists properly so called; (and he observed, there was now a material distinction between the two), the latter acknowledging the supre-

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macy of a foreign, though an ecclesiastical prince, who, according to the Right Hon. Gentleman, with all the odious, detestable, and dangerous opinions that belonged to his Church, ought not to be kept out of the most important and official situations, before the commission of some overt act against the Constitution, manifested by force of arms in the open field, by which the policy of *prevention* would be done away, and a dangerous door opened to the absolute ruin of the Constitution.

The Test and Corporation Acts, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, had been wisely adopted to secure the Constitution; and had it not been for them, the family of Stuart might have been at this day in possession of the Throne, and the Right Hon. Gentleman not have had an opportunity to state those opinions in the House, which the House had that day heard. The Right Hon. Gentleman, he said, was mistaken in his assertion, that no religious Test was taken by Members of the Legislature: every Gentleman present had taken a religious Test, by making a solemn appeal to Providence, when he took the oath against Transubstantiation,—which was purely religious; and the oaths of Allegiance and Abjuration were partly civil and partly religious. He urged the propriety and advantage of these Tests; and contended, that all governments adopted a Test of some kind or other; but that, in a country like this, where the Monarchy was limited, it was particularly necessary, that the Executive Power should be admitted to exercise a right of discrimination into the fitness of individuals to fill those stations for which the Executive was responsible: the necessity of Public Offices for the benefit of the Public at large, justified a distinction in the distribution, for the same reason;

reason; namely, the Benefit of the Public: the idea of a right in any of them to fill those offices, was ridiculous,—no such thing could exist,—nor could it be so Parliamenterially argued by any man, unless that man was ready to contend, that offices were created for the benefit of the holders, and not as a trust for the public; and also to contend, that the money paid those who held them, was rather to be raised by the way of lottery, than paid out of the public revenue. In our mixed Constitution, the appointment of offices necessarily and naturally rested with the Executive Power, over which the Legislature had made a wise application of limited Monarchy, by a restriction on the Monarch in the disposal of those offices.

Mr. Pitt here put the case of a small Republic, where, if a certain description of persons, holding religious tenets fundamentally dangerous to the Constitution of the Republic, were admitted to offices of trust, the Constitution of that Republic must necessarily be undermined, if no check of some nature or other were applied. The Right Hon. Gentleman entered into a comparison of the qualifications necessary for the electors and elected, and those which were deemed necessary to qualify persons for offices. He considered the Test as a sort of jealousy of the Monarch, which was never considered as unconstitutional; the persons kept out of office by that Test, were not in any sort stigmatized; nor had they a juster right of complaint, than those who were kept out of that House, or from voting at elections, in consequence of their being, by statute, disqualified from the right of an elector. In private life, it was a common policy for no man to admit another to the management of his affairs, if he did not

think well of that man's principles : the same policy applied in States ; it was therefore no usurpation in the Government if not approving of the political opinions of the Dissenters, they excluded them from office. He agreed with the Right Hon. Gentleman, that the merits or demerits of individuals, were not to be considered in the discussion of the present question ; he could not avoid, however, remarking a little on the conduct of the Dissenters, who, at the moment they were reprobating a Test, had pretty publicly indicated an intention of forming Associations throughout the whole country, for the purpose of putting the Members of that House to a Test, and of resolving to judge of their fitness to fill their seats, by their votes on this single question. They had explained themselves since, indeed, and declared, that they never meant to put a Test to any one ; in the explanation, however, it appeared, that they had retained the substance, though they had done away the word ; for in the resolutions of their meeting, signed by Mr. Jefferies, it was declared, that they meant to give their support to such Members who proved themselves to be friends to religious and civil liberty ; the true meaning of which general terms must strike every man. It was evident, the Dissenters would not consider any one a friend to Religious and Civil Liberty, who did not vote for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. In his opinion, therefore, they came with an ill grace to solicit the Repeal of a Test, when at the same moment they threatened the House with one.

The question of Right in the Dissenters to hold Offices, he conceived he had entirely done away ; that being the case, it had to rest upon its only true grounds,
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its Expediency and Policy ; and to decide on this question, he would divide it into four parts, and ask,

First, Whether an Establishment was not necessary, and materially connected with the State ?

Secondly, Whether the Dissenters are not likely to exercise power, if they were in possession of it ?

Thirdly, Whether the Repeal of the Acts would not give them that power ?

Fourthly, Whether any, and what practical inconveniences the Dissenters laboured under by the Test and Corporation Acts, and whether those Acts could be repealed with safety to the Established Church ?

It was not, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, necessary for him to trouble the House with an argument, to prove that there ought to be an Established Church, as that was admitted on all sides the House ; and even the Right Hon. Gentleman had almost said, in express terms, that it was *necessary* ; but, on recollecting himself, had declared an Established Church to be highly useful and advantageous ; nor need he, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, enter into a panegyric on the present established Church, as that had also been done so ably in a few words by the Right Hon. Gentleman ; who had justly observed, that it was equally devoid of all unnecessary exterior ceremony, and had nothing of enthusiasm or superstition in its interior rites. He need not, he said, trouble the House, to prove that the Dissenters would exercise power if put in possession of it ; since the possession of power, always produced the inclination to exercise it : and, without meaning to throw any stigma on the Dissenters, he could not hesitate a moment in supposing it probable, that they might feel inclined to exercise their power to

the subversion of the Established Church; it would be so far from reprehensible in them, that, possessing the principles they profess, and acting conscientiously upon those principles, it would become their duty, as honest men, to make the endeavour: for those who considered the Establishment to be "sinful, and bordering on idolatry," would not act conscientiously, nor consistently, unless they exercised all the legal means in their power to do away that idolatry.

He would not, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, enter into the Letters of Bishops, or the Sermons of Dissenting Ministers; but he fully agreed with the Right Hon. Gentleman, that it was their duty to confine themselves to good order, to the inculcation of virtuous principles, and that their only competition ought to be, a competition of who should lead the most exemplary lives, and evince the greatest purity of precepts; in fact, who should, by their preaching and their practice, conduce most to further the purposes of truth, piety, virtue, and morality. The Church, he said, ought to render services to the State, by meliorating the morals of the people; it was calculated so to do by the form of its Constitution, which was most congenial to the civil Constitution of the country, and agreeable to its mixed Monarchy; the balance of which would be deranged, were any of its parts lessened or increased in power.

The security for the safety of the Church was, he observed, in existence before the Revolution, at which time it was stated to have commenced by the Right Hon. Gentleman; but had it not been for those guards existing before the Revolution, the Revolution would probably have been stifled in its birth. He did not think,

think, he said, with the Right Hon. Gentleman, that were Dissenters successful in this application they would be desirous of proceeding no further; for those of that body who stood foremost in this application, and whose names were most frequently mentioned, did, by their declarations, absolutely contradict the promise of the Right Hon. Gentleman, some among them having openly declared their disaffection to the Constitution of the Church. There was sufficient ground then for alarm from such declarations; and it was the duty of the House to stand against the danger: in so doing, however, he would not refuse the Dissenters any right that belonged to them, nor refuse them any harmless regulation they might request, or any regulation which clearly led not to dangerous consequences. The simple question then before the House he conceived to be, Whether an Establishment was, or was not necessary? The House would not hesitate to declare in the affirmative; nor would they hesitate a moment in agreeing, that to maintain such an Establishment certain dues were to be collected: if, however, the House should agree to the present relief solicited by the Dissenters, the next application would be to have an exclusion from Church Dues, to which every single argument offered in support of the present Question would equally well apply. When the Dissenters, about fourteen years back, obtained what, if he understood the Right Hon. Gentleman correctly, he considered to be a completion of that Toleration which the Right Hon. Gentleman held not to have been compleated before, it was declared, both in and out of the House, that they meant to proceed no further; and Dr. Kippis, in his Letter, at the time upon the subject, said, that the Dissenters required

quired only a Toleration in the respect in question, and that granted, they would ask no more of the Legislature, but would retire to their closets and their books. Doctor Kippis, it was to be recollected, was a man of no inconsiderable rank and esteem among the Dissenters. This, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, he considered a good argument to press upon the House, to shew them, that by the profession of the Dissenters it was not to be judged with what they would be contented, or how far they might wish to proceed. The Repeal of the Test Act in Ireland was not in point to the present Question; since having been repealed only five years, it had not been repealed long enough to judge of its effects by experience; nor was the Church of Ireland in the same situation as the Church of England; for though the number of its followers was comparatively small to the people of the country, it had a security in the number of Catholics being as six to one over the Dissenters: nor was the Right Hon. Gentleman's observation on the Kirk of Scotland to the point: in the first place, the Test would there be but a very feeble barrier, as the majority of the Dissenters from the Kirk conformed to their mode of receiving the Sacrament; and in the second point it was safe, the Kirk of Scotland being secured by a solemn pledge in the Act of Union to maintain the Presbytery. The Right Hon. Gentleman's allusion to the Church of France before the Revocation of the edict of Nantz, was equally out of point; no Test was there necessary; for had the times been less bigotted than they were at that period, the Church would have been safe, as the will of the Sovereign was the law. With respect to America, to which
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the Right Hon. Gentleman had alluded, the opinions of other men were now pretty general, however much they had been divided during the war : one party contending, at that time, that the revolting provinces ought to be coerced to obedience, while another as strongly insisted that they ought to be left to themselves ; the world, at the same time, condemning both, the general opinion being, that England could not exist without her Colonies. The event, however, happily proved the contrary to be the fact ; in the loss of the territory of the Thirteen American Colonies, this country had lost but little of her commerce, though she had to boast of having lost the expence of preserving the civil constitution of those States. Separated as they now were from this country, he should rejoice if their Constitution resembled ours, and gave equal security to the subject for liberty, and for happiness. Their Constitution, however, was not the same, either in Church or State. The Right Hon. Gentleman's argument therefore, that no Test existed in that country, was equally distant from the point with the others that he had relied on ; America having no uniform or Established Church, it was clear, that she needed no Test to defend one. The Right Hon. Gentleman had declared, that the Test Laws were inefficacious, as the Legislature, he observed, was obliged every session to pass an Indemnity Act. If the fact had been so, nothing could be more obvious than that the ground of all complaint of oppression ceased ; for, according to the Right Hon. Gentleman's own shewing, the Law was not enforced ; but though the fact was, that the Law was not always rigidly enforced, the temperate forbearance of Government ought not to be taken an unjust advantage of, nor ought the Law to be

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repealed, its general object being meant for the security and permanent safety of the Church, and to prevent it from being endangered ; when the case did not appear pressing, or the danger imminent, it was not necessary to put those Laws in force, to the injury of a few individuals ; the impolicy, however, of suffering the remedy to such danger as might happen, to lapse and depart from the hand of Parliament, would be gross in the extreme ; for, should the Laws be once repealed, it might be impossible, when the danger was imminent and pressing, to get these salutary Laws re-enacted.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer summed up a very long and most able speech with declaring, that the Repeal appeared to him to be dangerous in every point of view to the Church, as now established, and to the Constitution and safety of the country. He then briefly adverted to the heads of the arguments he had offered to the House ; and concluded with declaring himself, from conviction, and on true constitutional principles, against the motion ; at the same time deprecating the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, as a measure that would tend to originate and encourage a dangerous competition, and most probably occasion the revival of all the mischiefs uniformly attending upon religious party contentions.

Mr. *Beaufey* began by observing—Is it not sufficient that the Dissenters are excluded from all the offices and honours of the State ? Is it not sufficient to be deprived of the common privilege of bearing arms ? Is it not sufficient that they should be involved in the same penalties with which the vengeance of the law pursues the most inveterate and atrocious offenders, but they must also be charged

charged with cherishing designs which their conduct had disproved as constantly as their language had disclaimed, and which their principles, as far as I have ever known them, have no tendency to produce? If they were really men of the factious disposition which the Right Hon. Gentleman has described, would they, in all times of national weakness and of public distress, have borne their sufferings with such constant, uniform, persevering patience, never troubling you at such seasons with solicitation or complaint? The example of Ireland had taught them that the hour of national distress is also that of national justice; but far from availing themselves of the knowledge which that example conveyed, they have always, in these unhappy moments of embarrassment, preferred a continuance of suffering to every hope of relief. It was not till all difficulties were removed, and all anxieties were fled—it was not till after the return of the general strength had given security to all rights but theirs, that they intreated your attention to the hardship they endured from the Sacramental Laws. After the continuance of such a conduct for more than one hundred and twenty years, they did venture to hope that they were entitled not only to the justice, but also to the partial attachment, and affectionate regard of the Legislature. Nor could he persuade himself, notwithstanding the censures of the Right Hon. Gentleman, that the House of Commons will hear with indignation that, which before a still greater tribunal, is always heard with indulgence, a repetition of the earnest intreaties of those who are struggling with oppression.

The arguments of the Right Hon. Gentleman naturally arrange themselves under two distinct heads, that

— of the conduct of the Dissenters, and that of the merits
 of the Question considered in the abstract. On the first
 of these points he charges them with inconsistency
 of conduct in endeavouring to impose a test upon
 others at the very time that they bitterly complain
 of the hardship resulting from the existence of a
 Test on themselves.—Inconsistency of conduct!—
 Is it unconstitutional and unfair that the Dissenter
 should say to the candidate for his favour, “you desire
 me to appoint you the guardian of all that is dear to
 an Englishman, the laws and constitution of his
 country, as well as his property and freedom; but
 before I consent to raise you to so important a sta-
 tion, permit me to ask, for it much concerns me to
 know, are you yourself a friend to the rights of the
 subject? Do you wish well to the cause of the in-
 jured, or are you disposed to uphold the course of
 oppression? You cannot be a stranger to the hard-
 ships to which I am exposed by the Sacramental
 Laws, nor can you want information on a subject
 which has been agitated in Parliament, and canvaf-
 sed by every person in the kingdom. If then you
 are not inclined to grant me that relief, which on
 every principle of justice, and of the faith of Parlia-
 ment, virtually, but strongly pledged, I am entitled
 to receive, on what principle, or on what pretext,
 can you expect my support? You refuse me the
 common privileges of a citizen; and, in return,
 shall I raise you to the rank of a Legislator? You
 with the continuance of Laws that expose me to the
 same punishment which is inflicted on those who
 have proved themselves faithless to man, and per-
 jured to Heaven; and in return for such indignities,
 shall

“ Shall I invest you with eminence and honour? ”—
 The policy, the wisdom of such language, in persons
 who constitute but a small part of the community, may
 perhaps be questioned; but surely, in that language,
 there is nothing that can be deemed unconstitutional or
 unfair.

In the next place, the Right Honourable Gentleman
 states that the Dissenters are justly chargeable with a
 breach of public faith, in claiming indulgencies from
 Parliament, after they had solemnly declared that, if
 the relief which a few years back was asked by their
 Ministers, were given, they should have nothing fur-
 ther to solicit from the legislature of their country; and
 in speaking on this subject, while he has expressed him-
 self towards Dr. Kippis with that justice which is ob-
 viously due to the eminence of his character, he has
 taxed him as the person to whom this charge of incon-
 sistency between conduct and assurances, specifically
 and solemnly given, particularly applies; but the Right
 Hon. Gentleman has too much candour to have ha-
 zarded such a charge, if he had not confounded two
 claims which are perfectly unconnected—That of the
 Ministers, who petitioned for, and obtained legislative
 relief; and that of the Laity, who were as little con-
 cerned in that relief as the Ministers now are in the
 specific indulgence, if such it must be called, to which
 the present application relates.

From this review of the several charges on the
 conduct of the Dissenters, Mr. Beaufoy next proceeded
 to the arguments by which Mr. Pitt had combated the
 rights which they claimed, to be deemed capable in law
 of enjoying those offices of honour and trust, to which
 the partiality of their Sovereign might call them. He
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observed, that there were two grounds on which the right of the Dissenters to that capacity had been combated. The first was, that a majority of the inhabitants of the kingdom have a right to exclude from all the employments of the State, such persons as differ from themselves in the abstract points of religious belief; the other was derived from a consideration of the objects and purposes of Government. On the first of these grounds Mr. Beaufoy said, that the argument had not been, and in his opinion, could not be strongly urged; for exclusive of every abstract consideration, it was perfectly clear, that such reasoning, however applicable in England to the actual situation of affairs, or convenient in itself for the purposes of the present discussion, was too inconsistent with the conduct of the British Government in another part of the empire, to be deemed salutary in practice, or wise in theory.

In arguing on the nature and ends of government, Mr. Beaufoy observed, that the right of the Dissenters to be deemed capable in law of holding such offices, civil or military, as they might be called upon to fill by the voice of their Sovereign, rested on the best and broadest of all foundations,—that on which Government itself is built.

He then observed, that he was perfectly aware that the right honourable Gentleman had endeavoured to shew, that the exclusion of unqualified persons to vote at elections, might, with as much reason, be considered as a penalty, as the exclusion of the Dissenters from the various capacities which their fellow citizens enjoy: but to this he replied, that a disqualification to vote at elections, where the legal requisite is wanting, has never yet been employed as a common penalty for offences; whereas the disabilities imposed upon the Dis-

Dissenters are penalties, familiar to the law, and expressly enjoined by the Legislature, as a punishment of crimes, the most abhorrent to the peace and well-being of social life. He said, he was also aware that the right honourable Gentleman had stated, that the Dissenters themselves did not consider the existence of the sacramental laws as being in any considerable degree a practical grievance; an opinion that could only be founded on his not having distinguished between the interest of the Dissenters, as composing a religious sect, and the feelings of the same Dissenters as Englishmen, dishonoured in the eyes of their countrymen, degraded in their privileges as citizens, and deprived of their rights as men.—Feelings which had often led them to complain in the emphatic language of the House of Peers, “ that to a more miserable situation than that in which they are placed, it is scarcely possible for an Englishman to be reduced.”

Before I conclude, said the honourable Member, it gives me much satisfaction to observe, that the right honourable Gentleman has neither denied nor contradicted any one of the facts on which the claim of the Dissenters to the solicited relief is built. They assert, that their ancestors were not persons against whom the provisions of the Test Act were originally framed, and that they were not included in the reason, though unhappily they were subjected to the burthen of the laws. The right honourable Gentleman does not pretend, in opposition to the title and preamble of the Act, as well as to all historic records, that the exclusion of the Dissenters from civil and military offices was the purpose for which it was designed. The Dissenters also allege, that the Test Act was passed under

implied but strong and equitable pledge, that relief from its restrictions should be given to the Dissenters. A pledge which the Parliament who passed that Act, though their efforts were defeated by the Act of the Court, repeatedly endeavoured to redeem. This fact also the right honourable Gentleman does not attempt to dispute. The Dissenters further maintain, that the Corporation Act was passed in a season of turbulence and national distress ; that its provisions were not more hostile to the Dissenters than to the Constitution itself, and that the reasons on which the Act was founded have long since ceased to operate. This fact also the right honourable Gentleman has not attempted to disprove. Thus, Sir, I have endeavoured to shew, that the facts on which the Dissenters have built their claim are unrefuted and unquestioned, and that the arguments which they have advanced, are opposed on such principles alone, as would justify, and have often produced the worst extreme of persecution. In all that I have said, I have submitted to the judgment of the House, those considerations alone which have governed my own conviction ; for as a friend to justice, I wish relief to the injured ; as a citizen devoted to the State, I am anxious to unite in the general defence of all those who are willing to hazard their lives for the general safety ; and as a member of the Church of England, I am solicitous to relieve her from reproach, perfectly convinced that she must be weakened in proportion as she is dishonoured, and that her permanent prosperity can never be derived from power founded on oppression.

Mr. *Powys* said, that though it was the third time that the present question had been debated, he had hitherto refrained from delivering his sentiments, for
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he had not, till now, made up his mind on the subject. It was, in his opinion, no hardship on any subject to comply with laws by which the King himself, as Chief Magistrate, was bound. He was as much an enemy to persecution as any man; but if the question was to pass, he would ask if the House were prepared to extend their Toleration to all other Sectaries,—to the Jews and the followers of Confucius? He urged a variety of arguments, and concluded with declaring his negative to the motion.

Mr. *Torke* stated, that he would not have troubled the House at a time when so many Gentlemen were desirous of delivering their opinions, if he had not felt himself particularly circumstanced with respect to the question. When an Hon. Gentleman proposed in the year 1787 a motion of a similar tendency to that which was actually under the consideration of the House, he said he thought it a motion which the House might have complied with, provided that the security of the Church was not likely to be impaired by such a compliance, and that the complete and permanent satisfaction of the Protestant Dissenters would be the probable consequence of it. He considered those as objects of great importance to the tranquillity of the country, which it was necessary for the House to attend to at all times, and particularly at the present moment. In voting for the motion of the Hon. Gentleman, he looked to those objects with some anxiety, and though upon a full consideration of the circumstances, under which the present motion was introduced, he could not give it the same conscientious support that he had formerly done; yet he considered the satisfaction of the Dissenters so extremely desirable, that if a Repeal of the Test

Laws would ensure that object, he should think it a proper concession, if it could be made consistently with the security of the Ecclesiastical and Civil Establishment of the Country. But he could not assent to a motion for a direct and unqualified Repeal, especially as the Right Hon. Gentleman had controverted the propriety of substituting any other security instead of that which he was desirous to remove.

Mr. *Burke* began a speech, which proved one of the most forcible and impressive that had been delivered in the debates of the three last Sessions against the repeal, with declaring the two preceding times the question had been agitated, he had absented himself from the House not having been able to make up his mind to any decision on the subject, and that even yet he had not been able to satisfy himself altogether, tho' certainly in a much greater degree than before, when he could not lay hold of any one straight forward principle to guide his judgment by. He was now, however, from information lately received, ready to say why he could not vote for his right Honourable friend's question. In every discussion relative to religion, Mr. *Burke* said, he was sorry to see the appearance of any thing like party spirit, because he thought such subjects ought not to be mingled nor contaminated with party but to be argued on their own grounds solely; every individual member whatever his political sentiments might be, and however they might differ from those of other Gentlemen, ought never once to suffer them to prejudice his judgment, nor ought he to allude to them in argument. It had given him concern therefore to observe that the Right Honourable Gentleman over the way, had directed a personal sneer at his Right Hon.

Hon. Friend in invidiously putting the case, that if a man of *his* [Mr. Fox's] bold and enterprising character was to come into power as a Minister, and countenanced the Dissenters, that they might obtain a footing in places of great trust, and thus become capable of endangering the safety of the civil constitution of the State. The manner in which his Right Honourable Friend had opened and argued the question, and the many very weighty and sound arguments he had brought forward in a manner so open and clear, might, he should have imagined, have rescued his Right Hon. Friend such a sarcasm; he was, he owned the more surprised, because there had been a Minister, who had formerly had a seat in that House, who had held publickly in the House of Lords, and in the face of the Bishops, a language respecting Churchmen, and the doctrine and ritual of our established religion, ten times more broad and gross than any thing his Right Hon. Friend had said of the High Churchmen in former days. The Minister to whom he had alluded, had been a man of brilliant talents and acknowledged abilities; a Minister who had directed the government of this country with great glory to its national character and great safety to the Constitution both in Church and State. The Minister in question, Mr. Burke said, was the late Earl of Chatham, who in the House of Lords had used these words:

"We have a CALVINISTIC CREED, a POPISH LITURGY, and
"an ARMINIAN CLERGY."

Thus he observed, had that noble Lord selected the worst names of other religions, and applied them to our Church and Liturgy. The Earl of Chatham was ever regarded as the protector of the Dissenters, and yet

he had never heard that the safety of the Church had been once thought in danger during his Administration. When he died, it was generally conceived, that he had left the protection of the Dissenters, with his mantle, to a noble Earl in the other House. That noble Earl had since been at the head of the Government of this country, and the Right Hon. Gentleman over the way had been at the same time in Administration, and no complaint had nevertheless been made, when that Administration ceased, that the Church had been left less safe by the noble Earl. An intimate and worthy friend of his, the late Sir George Saville, had also been an avowed friend to the Dissenters, and yet he verily believed had Sir George Saville ever been First Lord of the Treasury, he would have thought it his duty to protect the Established Church, and save it from the least innovation;—it was among a Minister's duties. The Right Hon. Gentleman, therefore, had no ground whatever for imagining or suggesting, that if his Right Hon. Friend were to be a Minister, that therefore he being avowedly a friend to the Dissenters, the safety of the Church would be endangered. His Right Hon. Friend, he observed, had rejoiced that the lower House of Convocation had not been convened or sat for a long time; but *Lazarus only sleepeth*, he said, he is not dead, was a fact that ought to be remembered. The lower House of Convocation was not out of existence; it lay dormant indeed, and in a state of dormancy, in his mind, it ought always to continue, unless when some great and real question alarming to the Church rendered its meeting necessary. His Right Hon. Friend had begun his speech with laying down the principles of Toleration and Persecution; all per-

secution,

secution, civil or religious, was odious and horrible? he had ever held it in detestation; but care ought to be taken that men did not, under colour of an abstract principle, deceive even themselves. Abstract principles, he said his Hon. Friend knew him well enough to know, he disliked, and never could bear; he detested them when a boy, and he liked them no better now he had silver hairs. Abstract principles were what his clumsy apprehensions could not grasp; he must have a principle embodied in some manner or other, and the conduct held upon it ascertained, before he could pretend to judge of its propriety and advantage in practice. But of all abstract principles, abstract principles of natural right, (which the Dissenters relied upon, as their strong hold) were the most idle, because the most useless, and the most dangerous to resort to. They superseded society, and broke asunder all those bonds that had formed the happiness of mankind for ages. He would venture to say, that if they were to go back abstractedly to original rights, there would be an end to all society. Abstract principles of natural right had been long since given up for the advantage of having, what was much better, society, which substituted wisdom and justice in the room of original right. It annihilated all those natural rights, and drew to its mass all the component parts of which these rights were made up. It took in all the virtue of the virtuous,—and all the wisdom of the wise.—It gave life, security, and action, to every faculty of the soul, and secured the possession of every comfort which those proud and boasting natural rights impotently held out, but could not ascertain. It gave alms to the indigent, defence to the weak, instruction to the ignorant, employment to the industrious, con-

solation to those who wanted it, nurture to the helpless, support to the aged, faith to the doubtful, hope to those in despair, and charity to all the human race; extending itself from acts of tenderness to the infant when it first cried in the cradle, to acts of comfort and preparation to the dying man on the way to the tomb. After the most sublime climax of description in detailing the advantages attributeable to society, and also deducible from the Church, which he stated as the necessary creature and assistant of society in all its great and most beneficial purposes, he professed his peculiar regard and reverence for the Established Church of this kingdom, and the necessity that existed to preserve it safe and entire at a time like the present, when he contended there was not merely a false alarm calculated to answer some purpose of mischief and oppression meditated by the Established Church herself, but strong and warantable grounds of serious apprehension for the Church's safety. In order to establish this position, he reverted to the definition of toleration, as laid down by his Right Honourable Friend, and said he did not clearly understand what his Right Hon. Friend meant, but he believed him to concur in opinion with him that men were not to be judged of merely by their opinions, but by the conduct they held compared with their opinions. His rule ever had been to trace effects to their causes, and thus by recurring to first principles, judge, as his Right Hon. Friend had well argued it, *a posteriori*, of the facts that followed. It was therefore by the conduct of the Dissenters that he judged of them, by their acts, their declarations, and their avowed intentions.

After an infinite deal of argument in illustration of the propriety and safety of resting a judgment with regard

gard to the danger to be dreaded from men, from a knowledge of their principles, and a comparison between their avowed principles, and their acknowledged and undeniable conduct, Mr. Burke said, that he might not be charged with calumniating the Dissenters, whom he had formerly espoused with the utmost zeal, when with Sir George Saville he had contended for their cause in respect to the Bill last passed in their favour, some fourteen years ago, but whom he now accused with holding conduct, and asserting doctrines that threatened the most imminent danger to the future safety, and even the very being of the Church, he would recur to facts, and produce such proofs of what he asserted, as should put the matter beyond a doubt, and establish to the satisfaction of every man who heard him, that he had attended very sufficiently to the broad and clear distinction between the fears of a man alarmed, on the reasonable conviction of the approach of real danger, and those kind of fears which originated in mere cowardice and unmanly weakness, before he admitted the apprehension that filled his mind at present. Mr. Burke after a definition of the three distinct points of view in which danger from any quarter to the Church was to be considered, viz. as to its nearness, its eminence, and the degree of mischief to be dreaded from it, proceeded to established facts, as he called them, which would, he said, prove the extent of each of the three divisions into which he had resolved the consideration. His first great proof was the production of two printed catechisms circulated by the Dissenters for the use of young non-conformists, written by Mr. Robinson and Mr. Palmer. The first catechism, he said, contained no one precept of religion. It consisted

ed of one continued invective against Kings and Bishops, in which every thing was misrepresented and placed in the worst light. In short, it was a catechism of misanthropy, a catechism of anarchy, a catechism of confusion ! grossly libelling the National establishment in every part and passage, and these catechisms were to be put into the hands of Dissenters children, who were thus to be taught in their early infancy to list out censures and condemnations of the Established Church of England, and to be brought up as a rising generation of its determined enemies, while possibly the dissenting preachers were themselves recommending the same sort of robbery and plunder of the wealth of the Church as had happened in France, where some men were weak enough to imagine a happy revolution had taken place ; but where he knew the most miserable system of government, at this moment prevailed that ever disgraced the annals of Europe.— He dwelt on the destruction of the Establishment of the French Church, as a circumstance peculiarly shameful and scandalous : those who had compared *the Church of Rome to the Whore of Babylon, the Kirk of Scotland to a kept Mistress, and the Church of England to something between a Prostitute and a modest Woman*, would probably, he said, be preaching up the same doctrines to their congregations, while the rising race of Dissenters were probably imbibing those principles so pernicious in themselves, and so dangerous to the safety of the Established Church of this Country ; and how could he tell but that it would end in the acting the same shameful scene, respecting the plunder of the wealth and revenues and the accompanying demolition of

of our Church, as it had done in the case of the Church of France?

Mr. Burke observed, that a hint of the use to which the wealth of our church might be appropriated, had been given, during the American war, by the Duke of Richmond in the House of Lords, when a Bishop was speaking in favour of that war; the Duke, in reply, mentioned the millions the war had cost the country; and said, as money must be had, the country knew to whom they might resort for it. His Grace, therefore, advised the Bishops to beware what conduct they pursued. Mr. Burke considered this as a suggestion which the Dissenters might, on a new hint, improve on, and thence induce the mob to view the wealth of the Church, as a better object than the bribes of Election Candidates.

After much argument on these points, Mr. Burke produced the books of catechism, of one of which (a political catechism) he read the title, with an entry from the General Meeting at Harlowe, (where all the Dissenters of that division assemble,) declaring their approbation of the work, and their resolution to circulate and recommend it in their division. Mr. Burke read also two or three passages pointed directly at the Church Establishment. Having laid great stress on these, he produced a letter, which, he declared, had only come to his hands the preceding day, written by Mr. Fletcher, a Dissenter, from a Meeting of Dissenting Ministers, held at Bolton, in Lancashire. Mr. Fletcher stated in his letter, that the Meeting avowed such violent principles, that he would not stay, but came away with some other moderate men. It described, that one Member, on being asked, What was their object, and whether they meant to seek for any thing more than the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts? answered, in the

language of our Saviour, " We know those things which ye are not yet able to bear." And on another Member's saying, " Give them a little light into what we intend;" informed him, " that they did not care the nip of a straw for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, but that they designed to try for the Abolition of the Tythes and the Liturgy." Mr. Burke descanted on this for some time; he then mentioned Dr. Priestley's declaration, " That he hated all Religious Establishments, and thought them sinful and idolatrous;" and produced a letter of Dr. Priestley's, in which the Doctor talks of a train of gunpowder being laid to the Church Establishment, which would soon blow it up, if the danger was not avoided by the friends to the Establishment: the Doctor adds, and if that danger were avoided, and they refused to Repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, the Establishment would soon tumble about their ears. After paying Dr. Priestley all the compliments due to a man of his acknowledged literary abilities, Mr. Burke animadverted, with great pointedness, on the doctrine contained in the letter just read by him, which he considered as a serious indication, on the part of Dr. Priestley, at least, of a determination to proceed, step by step, till the whole of the Church Establishment was levelled to its foundations.

Having, with all his powers of ingenuity, painted this in the most forcible colours, Mr. Burke lastly produced Dr. Price's Sermon, from whence he read an extract; he commented upon it with great severity, and complimented his Right Hon. Friend, on the handsome way in which he had been liberal enough to treat a composition, that deserved so little at his hands. He agreed with Mr. Fox, that the Church and the Pulpit ought to be kept pure and undefiled, and that politics

had no business to be adverted to in either. With equal propriety might theological discussions, he said, be taken up in that House; and questions solely religious, be debated there. From the proofs he had adduced, consisting of the extract from Dr. Price's Sermon; the Letter of Dr. Priestley; the avowed language of that Divine, relative to religious Establishments in general; the Catechisms of Mr. Robinson and Mr. Palmer, and the letter of Mr. Fletcher, he drew this inference, viz. that the leading Preachers among the Dissenters, were avowed enemies to the Church of England; that they acknowledged their intentions; and that thence our Establishment appeared to be in much more serious danger, than the Church of France was in a year or two ago.

Mr. Burke reminded the House, that nothing could have been, to all appearance, more safe and secure, than the hierarchy of France, at a very short period since; every thing, therefore, that fell far short of the present danger of the Church of England, ought to be regarded as a symptom of serious apprehension, and to challenge new caution, and additional care. He said, he could not admit that his Right Hon. friend had, with any sort of justice, ascribed the fatal incidents that had attended the Church of France, plundered and demolished in so disgraceful a manner, to the punishment which Providence, in its wisdom, had allotted for the wickedness and cruelty of the French Government, evinced in the revocation of the edict of Nantz. Such an idea was chimerical and profane. Was it consistent with the justice of Providence, to punish Louis XVI. for the crime of Louis XIV? As well might it be argued, that the danger which now threatened the Established Church of England, was a punishment inflicted by the hand of Providence on

this country, for the persecutions of Laud, Bishop Whitgift, and all the horrid cruelties, burnings, and murders, perpetrated, under pretence of religious zeal, in distant periods of our history !

Mr. Burke complimented the Right Hon. Gentleman over the way, on the laudable attention he had shewn to the preservation of our religious establishment. It was, he said, peculiarly the duty of any Member of that House, standing in the Right Hon. Gentleman's situation, to guard, with anxious care, an object so intimately connected with the State as the Church of this country ; and the Right Hon. Gentleman had discharged his duty with great zeal, and great ability. That House also had the same duty imposed on them : they were equally bound to watch over the Church with due and constant attention ; and this appeared to be a moment peculiarly requiring their interference.

Had the Question been brought forward ten years ago, Mr. Burke said, he should have voted for the Repeal. At present, a variety of circumstances made it appear imprudent, to his mind, to meddle with it. For the Dissenters, as a body, he entertained great esteem. There were among them many worthy and most respectable individuals. If they would come fairly forward, he would meet them ; and, let their actual desire and meaning be ascertained, he, for one, should be glad to sift their object ; and if it were such as a rational Legislature could safely grant, he, at least, should have no objection. With several Dissenters he had long lived in the greatest intimacy and happiness. Indeed, they were among those of his friends whom he valued most highly ; but, at present, if the Test and Corporation Acts were repealed, some other Test ought to be substituted : the present he had always thought a bad and an insufficient Test to its end. He

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was convinced that it was an abuse of the Sacramental Rite, and the Sacramental Rite was too solemn an act for prostitution. Where conscience really existed, he said, it ought not to be wounded. By wounding a man's conscience, they annihilated the God within him (if he might be allowed so to express it) and violated him in his sanctuary.

He professed himself ready to grant relief from oppression to all men, but unwilling to grant power, because power, once possessed, was generally abused. He declared he had a draft of another Test in his pocket; and he had formed an idea of moving the previous Question, with a view afterwards to move for a Committee to examine into the conduct of the Dissenters, the doctrines respecting the Established Church which they had recently avowed, and all that part of their conduct, to which he had adverted, as matter of establishable fact, and not of vague or wild assertion.

Mr. Burke said, he was desirous of proceeding regularly, and with a due regard to parliamentary forms. He did not wish the House to rely on his facts before he had established them by proof, of which he knew them to be capable. If, however, they should, upon investigation, not appear to be founded, he would hold himself bound to vote for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.

Mr. Burke said, he would be entirely governed by the House: if they should think the best way of laying the Question at rest would be by coming to a vote upon the motion, he would submit. [A loud cry of *hear! hear!* by way of approbation of that mode.] But if the House should be of opinion, that it would be better to move the previous Question on the present motion, and institute a Committee, so as to afford the
Dissenters

Dissenters an opportunity of refuting what he had asserted (which he owned he himself thought the most eligible mode of proceeding) he would pursue that.

Mr. Burke, in the course of his speech, illustrated and enlivened his argument, by much brilliant expression, pertinent allusion, and striking observation.—Among other examples, to provoke the caution of the House, he instanced Lord George Gordon's mob, and the dangers that were then likely to have ensued, under a blind idea that they were acting in support of the Established Religion, when they were endeavouring to enforce the most intolerant persecution—had nearly levelled the Constitution in Church and State, the rabble having surrounded that House, and created a most serious alarm, lest the national credit should be destroyed by their demolishing the Bank. In a less important part of their conduct also, they had markedly described their drunken folly, and irrational conduct, by selecting the Judges and Bishops for the peculiar objects of their vengeance.

Mr. Burke dwelt on this event as one that ought to stimulate to caution in the present circumstances; and after adding a great variety of observations, concluded a very able, eloquent, and striking speech, with again declaring, that he should be governed by the House, but would not vote against the motion, although he did not think this a fit moment for such a motion to be put.

Mr. *W. Smith* spoke in answer to Mr. Burke, and said, that the virulent and severe abuse thrown out against the respectable body of Dissenters, would have had more effect on his mind, had not the same gentleman indulged himself in still more unqualified imputations against a whole nation, that had nobly delivered itself from a state of ignominious bondage, and had recovered

covered the just inheritance of freedom. He assured Mr. Burke, that the Catechism, of which he complained so much, was not adopted by the Dissenters; he had never heard of it till that day, nor of the Eastern Association. Mr. Smith spent some little time in general argument, in favour of the Repeal, and contended, that it was illiberal to stigmatize a whole body of people, because one or two of them, whose zeal might carry them too far, had exceeded those bounds which the more cool and temperate would certainly confine themselves to.

Mr. Smith, (Member for Worcester), rose to trouble the House with a few words upon the present question, because he found himself in a predicament, in which it was necessary to give a vote different to what he gave upon a former occasion; he felt it a duty incumbent upon him to follow the wishes and instructions of his Constituents, whenever he could obey them, consistent with the duty that he owed to his country at large. He said, if, in voting against the present question, he should deprive, for a time, a numerous body of loyal subjects of certain rights to which they conceive themselves entitled, but of which a jealous apprehension of ecclesiastical security, had found it expedient in less enlightened days to deprive them, he did but yield an acquiescence to the opinion of many able men, who oppose the Repeal of the Acts, of which the Dissenters complain, and consent to their continuing in force, in compliance with the wishes of a numerous and respectable body of his constituents, who are not as yet convinced, that the necessity which made it wise and expedient to pass them, has entirely ceased to exist: in obeying, therefore their instructions, which it was his duty to do, he could not do an injury to his country.

Mr.

Mr. *Wilberforce* said, that had he been able to catch the Speaker's eye earlier in the day, he should have gone at large into the question; yet he felt that it became him, in his situation, not to give altogether a silent vote. He rose, therefore, merely to declare, that he should decidedly vote against the motion of the right honourable Gentleman, to whose allusion also to himself it had been his intention to reply, and he trusted in a manner perfectly satisfactory, but that also he must leave for the present: the question was now brought into a narrow compass; an establishment of religion was conceived to be adviseable at least, if not necessary; and the only thing at issue was, whether this would be endangered by granting the Dissenters' request, under all the circumstances of the present case, and the present time; it was his firm conviction that it would, and therefore he should resist the application.

Sir *William Dolben* rose to rescue the Clergy from the imputations which he conceived to have been cast upon them by Mr. Fox, in his observations on the conduct of the High Churchmen, at different periods of our history. Sir William went into a short history of the conduct of our Clergy in the reign of Charles the First, and contended, that they had stood by the Monarch and the legal Government, till by the machinations of the Dissenters, the Prince, the State, the Church, and even the Constitution itself had been involved in one common ruin. Sir William also defended the conduct of the Clergy at other periods, to which he imagined Mr. Fox had alluded.

Mr. *Windham* declared himself the Representative of a populous city, among the Members of which there were as great a body of Dissenters as in almost any place throughout Great-Britain, and who to him had behaved with the utmost liberality: for as their
candidate

candidate, to him they had nobly and liberally avowed their dislike to shackle him in political opinion, even on the great and important question relating to themselves; therefore, whatever private opinion he might have on the subject, he could not subscribe to the severe declamation against Dissenters in general, which he had heard delivered in that evening's debate.

Mr. Fox then rose, and said, exhausted as he felt himself by the length of the debate, he should not have troubled the House a second time, had he not felt it necessary to restate some of his principles, which appeared to have been misunderstood. He had stated, as the grand principle of toleration, that it consisted in not deducing from men's opinions inferences of evil intentions, contrary to their own express declaration. It had been said, that the present was not a question of toleration; whether it was, or was not, it was clearly in his judgment, a question of justice, deducible from the principle he had stated, as the principle of Toleration, viz. that evil intentions were not to be inferred from men's opinions, but from their actions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's argument rested on the ground, that if the Dissenters obtained what they now demanded, they would be encouraged to grasp at more; and consequently there was reason to fear that they would never rest till they had overturned the present establishment; but this was merely the right honourable Gentleman's inference, and not their declaration. He had also endeavoured to make out a resemblance between a religious test and an oath; but, in what did the resemblance consist? A test implied a solemn profession of belief in the articles of some particular religion, while an oath was no more than a solemn affirmation of truth, which every man was permitted to make according to the form of that religion which he himself professed; and the latter was, in his

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opinion,

opinion, the only way in which religion ought to be made subservient to government. The principle, that one set of men might judge of the evil tendency of other men's opinions, and take measures to guard against that evil tendency, was of very great and formidable extent. On this principle might the massacre of Paris be justified, and every other outrage of persecution against reason and humanity. On his own principle, that intentions were not to be inferred from opinions, he was far from imagining that the gentleman who had recourse to his argument, ever meant to push it to such extent; but this, he contended, was the true tendency of the principle on which they argued.

Mr. Fox then repeated what he had formerly said of his great obligations to Mr. Burke, from whom he derived many of the principles he had that day stated.—He had heard the speech of his Right Hon. Friend, with *grief and shame*. He had, however, this consolation, that his own arguments were founded on principles which he had learned from Mr. *Burke*, while those of Mr. *Burke* were founded on pamphlets or rumours, on anecdotes and suspicions. He then concluded with declaring, that although he was not authorised by any body of men to promise that the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts was all they aimed at, he was fully convinced, that to grant the Repeal of those Acts was the most certain means of preventing other aims; as a great number of the Dissenters would certainly be satisfied with that Repeal, and withdraw their support from those who might aim at other things.

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The House divided,

AYES,

NOES,

105

294

Majority,

189

